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·OF·MORMONISM·

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A FOURFOLD TEST OF MORMONISM

BY
HENRY C. SHELDON
Professor in Boston University

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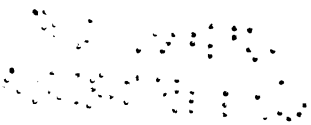

PREFACE

SCHOLARS generally have had such a lively impression of the utter groundlessness of the claims of Mormonism that they have been inclined to shrink from awarding those claims any serious consideration. We can appreciate this mental attitude; but we remind ourselves that it is not always wise and profitable to follow the dictates even of a just disdain. Apart from its intrinsic merits, a system which seeks to perpetuate and extend itself by a great force of missionaries kept constantly in the field may well be awarded a measure of careful scrutiny. This conviction has led us to prepare the present treatise. Our aim has been to give in brief form a comprehensive and thoroughly articulated criticism of the Mormon religion.

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The footnotes indicate in general the sources from which we have drawn. It is incumbent on us, however, to make grateful mention of the information which has been furnished in personal letters of very competent observers of present-day Mormonism in Utah.

Boston University, July, 1914.

PART I

THE HISTORICAL TEST

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THE HISTORICAL TEST

THE foremost credential of Joseph Smith, Jr., whom the Mormons recognize as their founder, was undoubtedly the Book of Mormon, which was published at Palmyra, New York, in 1830, as a translation of writings engraved in Reformed Egyptian upon plates which had been hidden some fourteen centuries before in a hill near the translator's home, and which, according to his story, were brought into his possession in 1827 through the instrumentality of an angel. As the agent for introducing this *new Bible* into the world, Joseph Smith had, among the enthusiasts who gathered about him, a prestige which kept him in the ascendant. As often as any one of them was taken with

an ambition to play any sort of independent role as prophet, or revelator, he could be put to silence by the superior authority of the man who was reputed to have been the chosen means of bringing to light a full volume of sacred writings.

It is evident, then, that the first demand, in a crucial dealing with Mormonism, is to test the claims of the founder in relation to the Book of Mormon. The primary question is: Are those claims credible, or do they bear unmistakably the stamp of falsehood and imposture?

Many considerations, some of which are of compelling force, shut up the critical investigator to the second alternative. In the first place, the antecedent character and occupation of Joseph Smith invite strongly to the belief that his discovery of the Book of Mormon was a mere pretense. He was notoriously given to

telling big stories. Pomeroy Tucker, who was well acquainted with Joseph, his family, and most of his earlier followers, testifies that as a youth and young man he was "noted for his indolent and vagabondish character, and his habits of exaggeration and untruthfulness."[1] Daniel Hendrix writes from personal knowledge of Smith: "He was a good talker, and would have made a fine stump-speaker if he had had the training. He was known among the young men I associated with as a romancer of the first water. I never knew so ignorant a man as Joe was to have such a fertile imagination. He never could tell a common occurrence in his daily life without embellishing the story with his imagination."[2] S. S. Harding, a native of Palmyra, makes note of the fact that Smith as a boy

[1] Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism, p. 16.
[2] Cited by W. A. Linn, The Story of the Mormons, p. 13.

had such a reputation for exaggeration that it was a customary comment in the neighborhood when a specially incredible story was narrated, "That is as big a lie as young Joe ever told."[1] In 1833 eleven residents of Manchester and fifty-one residents of Palmyra (the two neighboring towns in which the Smith family lived during their stay in the State of New York) recorded their judgment on the shiftless and untrustworthy character of the Smith family, Joseph included.[2]

Not less full and explicit is the testimony of witnesses, having personal knowledge, to the radical bent of Joseph Smith to play the role of a magical occultism in search for hidden treasure. The fifty-one residents of Palmyra mentioned above

[1] Thomas Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, p. 39.

[2] E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, 1834, pp. 261, 262. Several individual testimonies, besides these collective statements, are cited by Howe from residents of these towns.

refer to the large amount of time spent in digging for money imagined to have been concealed in the earth. Pomeroy Tucker narrates how Joseph claimed by means of a "peep-stone," or "seer-stone"—a peculiar stone which was discovered in 1819 while a well was being dug on the premises of Willard Chase—to be able to point out the location of buried treasure. He says that he practiced this imposture at intervals from 1820 to 1827, the latter date being that of the alleged delivery to him of the plates of the Book of Mormon.[1] Isaac Hale, whose daughter Emma, much against the wish of her father, was married to the pretentious treasure-seeker, records this statement: "I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr., in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called *money-diggers*,

[1] The Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism, pp. 19–26.

and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see, by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure."[1]

Antecedents of this kind have an unmistakable significance. Where in all the world could a more select agent be found for concocting the fiction of the "Golden Bible" than the young man notorious for telling fantastic yarns and for claiming to be able with his magical peep-stone to locate hidden treasures? Who can fail to see that the story of the finding and translation of the Book of Mormon was squarely in line with the swollen talk and peep-stone performances of this latter-day Joseph? All these things fall into one continuous series. The alleged translation, so far as connected with any peculiar instru-

[1] E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, pp. 262–266.

mentality, was a peep-stone performance. The claim that "urim and thummim" (described as large prisms set in rims) were employed was probably an afterthought, a refinement on the crude original scheme of magic. It is to be noticed that a Mormon historian concedes that the peep-stone figured in the work of translation, though he supposes the urim and thummim to have been used also.[1]

In the second place the different stories which Smith told about the plates of the Book of Mormon impeach his honesty and veracity in the matter. As appears in the testimony of Peter Ingersoll given below, he declared primarily that no one (himself excepted) could see the plates and live.[2] According to his declaration made in the presence of Sophia Lewis, the book of plates could not

[1] J. H. Evans, One Hundred Years of Mormonism, p. 70. Compare B. H. Roberts, New Witness for God, iii, pp. 106–110.

[2] E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, pp. 232–237.

be opened under penalty of death by any other person than his firstborn.[1] By the terms of the revelation dated March, 1829, and printed in the authoritative volume of Doctrine and Covenants,[2] only three of that generation were to be qualified to testify along with Smith on the ground of being shown that which had been disclosed to him. In direct conflict with the tenor of this revelation, a statement incorporated with the Book of Mormon affirmed that eight besides the three had not only seen, but handled, the plates. To the Rev. N. C. Lewis, a relative of Smith's father-in-law, he made promise that at a certain future time, when the plates would be placed on exhibition, there would be a chance for him to view them.[3] Thus involved and contradictory were his declarations on the

[1] Howe, p. 269.
[2] Doctrine and Covenants, v, 10–14.
[3] Howe, pp. 266, 267.

possibility and the conditions of seeing the unearthed original of the Mormon Bible. In other respects also his stories failed to match. In the final version an angel served as the custodian of the plates. But as Hiel and Joseph Lewis, sons of N. C. Lewis, declare, Smith reported to their father that the figure which confronted him when he attempted to get the plates was that of "a Spaniard having a long beard down over his breast, with his throat cut from ear to ear and the blood streaming down."[1] With still more flagrant self-contradiction, he admitted in a burst of confidence that the story of his great discovery originated in a pleasantry perpetrated on his own family. In the affidavit of Peter Ingersoll, as given in 1833, we are informed that he accompanied Smith on a trip to the home of Isaac Hale, in Harmony,

[1] Linn, The Story of the Mormons, p. 28.

Pennsylvania, in order to assist him to bring back the effects of the wife whom he had secured shortly before by an elopement. He says that Smith was noticeably affected by the rebuke which he received from his father-in-law, and was not a little inclined to accept his admonition to give up his foolish search for money by means of the peep-stone, but he felt that his family would wish to push him on in the old line. "In this dilemma," continues Ingersoll, "he made me his confidant, and told me what daily transpired in the family of the Smiths. One day he came and greeted me with a joyful countenance. Upon asking the cause of his unusual happiness, he replied in the following language: 'As I was passing yesterday across the woods, after a heavy shower of rain, I found in a hollow some beautiful white sand that had been washed up by the water. I took off my

frock and tied up several quarts of it, and then went home. On entering the house I found the family at the table eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment I happened to think about a history found in Canada, called a Golden Bible; so I very gravely told them that it was the Golden Bible. To my surprise, they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly, I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it, "for," says I, "no man can see it with his natural eye and live." However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but they refused to see it and left the room. Now,' said Joe, 'I have got the d——d fools fixed, and will carry out the fun.' Notwithstanding he told me he had no such book and believed there never was such a book, he told me he actually went to

Willard Chase to get him to make a chest in which he might deposit the Golden Bible."[1] From Chase we learn that the request for making the chest was actually put forward, but was not complied with because the desired guaranty of good faith was not furnished.[2] Coupled with the conflicting statements of Smith about the plates, this affidavit of Ingersoll, supported as it is by the testimony of several of his acquaintances to his integrity and reliability,[3] is well adapted to carry the conviction that it is a true report of the inception of the Golden Bible project. It is any amount more credible than all the stories told about the visitation of angels or the attempts of satanic foes to wrest away the newly discovered treasure.

In the third place the ample list

[1] Howe, pp. 232-237.
[2] Ibid., p. 245.
[3] Ibid., 248, 249.

of demonstrations given by Joseph Smith of his capability of downright faking are destructive of faith in the supposition that he either possessed or translated any antique documents. At the head stands the demonstration which he incautiously gave in connection with the Book of Mormon. Being importuned by Martin Harris—who mortgaged his farm to provide money for the publication of the new Bible—to give him a specimen of the Reformed Egyptian in which the volume was assumed to have been written, Smith at length furnished the specimen. Harris took this to Professor Charles Anthon in New York city. According to the statement of the professor—which, as the testimony of an upright disinterested party, weighs incomparably more than that which Smith was pleased to give of the matter some years later—he saw at once that a fraud was being at-

tempted. The paper presented by Harris, he says, was a singular scrawl. "It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters, disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted, or placed sideways, were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns; and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch as I have frequently conversed with my friends on the subject since the Mormonite excitement began, and well remember that

the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics." [1]

That Smith's claim to have an antique book written in Reformed Egyptian was a capital instance of faking is further placed beyond reasonable doubt by subsequent instances of a like unscrupulous procedure on his part. In 1835 he secured from a traveling showman some mummies, attached to which were papyri inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphics. In 1842 he made bold to publish facsimiles of the hieroglyphics and a translation in which it was made out that the curious characters incorporated a biography by the hand of Abraham. Jules Remy, who obtained a copy of the text and translation,

[1] Dated February 17, 1834, and printed in Howe's Mormonism Unveiled, pp. 270–272. A letter of Anthon seven years later refers to this visit of Harris, and also gives an account of a second visit. Mormon apologists are able to point out some discrepancies between the two letters. But they are such as might result from a memory not supported by records at hand, and on the main point —the character of the pretended excerpt from the Book of Mormon—the two letters show complete agreement.

submitted them to Théodule Devéria, of the Museum of the Louvre, and published his rendering alongside that of Smith in 1861. The contrast between the two is striking. The French savant, in fact, convicts Smith of groundless pretense in his interpretation of the Egyptian characters.[1] A like result was reached by the English Egyptologists, Budge and Woodward, in 1903.[2] More recently the facsimiles were submitted to the inspection of the following experts: A. H. Sayce, W. M. Flinders Petrie, James H. Breasted, Arthur C. Mace, John Peters, S. A. B. Mercer, Edward Meyer, and Friedrich Freiherr von Bissing. Passing judgment in entire independence of each other, these eminent scholars were fully agreed in the conclusion that the facsimiles were specimens of characters commonly

[1] Remy, A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, ii, pp. 536ff.
[2] The Utah Survey, September, 1913, pp. 11, 12.

found in Egyptian tombs, and that the interpretation by Joseph Smith was utterly aside from their real significance.[1]

Another instance of fraudulent pretense, historically less important but quite as glaring as that just mentioned, is reported by the Rev. Henry Caswall. In 1842 he visited Nauvoo, Illinois, then the headquarters of Mormonism. To test the latter-day "prophet" he took with him a Greek manuscript of the Psalter, judged to be about six hundred years old and quite antique in appearance. The result of his interview he reports in these words: "I handed the book to the prophet and begged him to explain its contents. He asked me if I had any idea of its meaning. I replied that I believed it to be a Greek Psalter; but that I should like to hear his

[1] Joseph Smith, Jr., as Translator. An Inquiry conducted by Right Rev. F. S. Spalding, D.D., Bishop of Utah, 1912.

opinion. 'No,' he said, 'it ain't Greek at all, except perhaps a few words. What ain't Greek is Egyptian; and what ain't Egyptian is Greek. This book is very valuable. It is a dictionary of Egyptian hieroglyphics.' Pointing to the capital letters at the commencement of each verse, he said: 'Them figures is Egyptian hieroglyphics; and them which follow is the interpretation of the hieroglyphics written in Reformed Egyptian. Them characters is like the letters which was engraved on the golden plates.' "[1]

On the same level with this case of baseless pretense was the claim of Smith to be able to translate the Kinderhook plates and to discover in them a history of one of the descendants of Ham.[2] These plates were dug up near Kinderhook, Illinois, in 1843.

[1] The City of the Mormons, or Three Days at Nauvoo in 1842, second edition, 1843, p. 36.

[2] Reported in the Millennial Star, January 15, 1859.

Not a few were deceived by their antique appearance, till at length in 1879, W. Fulgate, one of those to devise the humbug, made affidavit as to how the plates had been fashioned and caused to bear the semblance of age.[1]

A further instance, in a somewhat different line but equally significant of brazen pretence and headlong disregard for truth, appears in the so-called translation of the Christian Bible. Large parts of the translation do not differ at all from the King James Version, and many other parts differ only by slight verbal changes. But an out and out addition is made to the fiftieth chapter of Genesis, and the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah is arbitrarily amplified, the plain design

[1] Linn, pp. 86, 87. The plea of a Mormon apologist that the late date of Fulgate's testimony is ground for challenging its truthfulness is far from disposing of the sworn statement. The necessity that the witness should take account of his confederates, as well as a natural hesitation to declare his share in a fraud on the public, might easily have induced delay.

of this double outrage against the text being the insertion of a forecast of the prophetic vocation of Joseph Smith and of the unearthing of the Book of Mormon. In this barefaced falsification, Rigdon, as being joint translator with Smith, was an accomplice.[1]

The necessary inference from such a series of unmasked pretenses is that faith in Joseph Smith, as the discoverer and translator of a veritable Bible preserved in an antique language, must be the product of ignorance, credulity, tradition, or sheer volition. Of substantial basis it is thoroughly destitute, unless the Book of Mormon itself is of such a marvelous character, and so unaccountable on ordinary grounds, as to afford such a basis. That the book is not thus distinguished will be shown in due course.

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, xxxv.

In the fourth place, the high pretensions of Joseph Smith in relation to the Book of Mormon must be regarded as most seriously damaged by the historical demonstration that, to a conspicuous degree, the groundwork of that book was borrowed from a romantic story of Solomon Spaulding entitled Manuscript Found. This was begun in 1811 or 1812 at Conneaut, Ohio, was left for a time in the printing office of Patterson in Pittsburgh, was probably taken thence to Amity, Pennsylvania, to be retouched, and was sent anew to Patterson's establishment shortly before the death of the author in 1816.[1] As first planned, Spaulding's story contained an account of a party of voyagers who left Rome in the time of Constantine, and were driven ashore on the American continent, where one of their number

[1] See the very careful review of the matter by A. T. Schroeder, The Origin of the Book of Mormon Reexamined in Its Relation to Spaulding's Manuscript Found.

left a narrative of their travels, as also of Indian wars and customs, which narrative Spaulding assumes to have discovered and translated. The story in this form came into the possession of E. D. Howe in 1834, and then passed out of sight until it accidentally fell into the possession of President Fairchild, of Oberlin, in 1884, and was deposited in the college library. In the later and better remembered form, as being that from which the author often read to his friends, the story was carried further back, the voyagers were represented as starting from Jerusalem, and an effort was made to reproduce the antique biblical style. In this respect the later form of the story was widely contrasted with the earlier. Several witnesses, shortly after the appearance of the Book of Mormon, affirmed, in the most explicit terms, that the Spaulding story to which they had listened had

this peculiar cast. Moreover, the testimony of the brother of Solomon Spaulding, of his business partner, and of several others assures us that the story in this form represented the voyagers to America as being Jews and as starting from Jerusalem. Herein it corroborates the statement of Howe, who says that the Oberlin manuscript was shown to several of the witnesses whom he cites and was characterized by them as the earlier and discarded form of the Spaulding romance.[1] It is utterly vain, therefore, for Mormon apologists, as they have been wont to do, to plead the unlikeness of the Oberlin writing to the Book of Mormon as disproving the obligations of Joseph Smith to Spaulding's manuscript. It affords not the slightest installment of a disproof of substantial obligations. The most that could be alleged would be that its style is in

[1] Mormonism Unveiled, p. 288.

contrast with that of the Book of Mormon. The contrast, however, may be explained by the twofold fact that Spaulding in the later version of his story wrote of set purpose in a peculiar style, and that Joseph Smith, in working over the materials furnished by Spaulding, conformed them to a very appreciable degree to his own habits of expression.

When the Book of Mormon began to be circulated those who had listened to the Spaulding story, with its peculiar names and its antique biblical style, were at once struck with the close resemblance between the two writings, and several of them have witnessed to that effect. John Spaulding, to whom his brother Solomon read passages of his Manuscript Found, says: "It was an historical romance of the first settlers of America, endeavoring to show that the American Indians are descended from the Jews, or the

lost tribes. It gave a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem by land and sea, till they arrived in America under the command of Nephi and Levi. They afterward had contentions and quarrels and separated into two distinct nations, one of which he denominated Nephites and the other Lamanites. Cruel and bloody wars ensued, in which great multitudes were slain. . . . I have recently read the Book of Mormon, and, to my great surprise, I find nearly the same historical matter, names, etc., as they were in my brother's writings. I well remember that he wrote in the old style and commenced about every sentence with, 'And it came to pass,' or 'Now it came to pass,' the same as in the Book of Mormon."[1] Joseph Miller of Amity, Pennsylvania, noting the fact that he often heard Spaulding

[1] This expression is repeated more than forty times in the first chapter of the Mormon Bible.

read from his manuscript, remarks: "I had the Book of Mormon in my house for about six months for the purpose of comparing it with my recollection of the lost Manuscript Found, and I unhesitatingly say that a great part of the historical part of the Book of Mormon is identical with the manuscript, and I firmly believe that the manuscript is the foundation of the whole concern." Henry Lake, who was partner with Solomon Spaulding in rebuilding a forge at Conneaut, spent many hours in hearing him read from his manuscript. "This book," he says, "represented the American Indians as the lost tribes, gave an account of their leaving Jerusalem, their contentions and wars, which were many and great. One time, when he was reading to me the tragic account of Laban, I pointed out to him what I considered an inconsistency, which he promised to correct; but by re-

ferring to the Book of Mormon I find, to my surprise, it stands there just as he read it to me then. . . . I have no hesitation in saying that the historical part of the Book of Mormon is principally, if not wholly, taken from The Manuscript Found. I well recollect telling Mr. Spaulding that the so frequent use of the words 'And it came to pass,' 'Now it came to pass,' rendered it ridiculous." Hiram Lake, son of the foregoing, testifies: "My father told me that the Book of Mormon was unquestionably derived from the Spaulding manuscript. Since 1834 I have conversed with Aaron Wright, John N. Miller, and Nathan Howard, old residents here [Conneaut], now deceased, all of whom lived here in 1811 and 1812, and who had heard Spaulding's manuscript read, and they told me they believed the Book of Mormon was derived from Spaulding's Manuscript Found. Some or all of

these persons made affidavits to this effect which were published in a book called Mormonism Unveiled, edited by E. D. Howe, of Painesville, Ohio." Hiram Gould, referring to the same persons, affirms: "I heard them all say that the Book of Mormon was undoubtedly taken from a manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding." Oliver Smith, to whom Spaulding, while stopping at his house, read one hundred or more pages of the romance, makes this statement: "When the Book of Mormon came into the neighborhood and I heard the historical part of it related, I at once said that it was the writing of Solomon Spaulding."[1] Very significant is the exclamation which sprang from the lips of Squire Wright when, in 1832, the Book of Mormon was read in public at Con-

[1] All of the above testimonies are given by Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, New Light on Mormonism, appendix. See also Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, pp. 278–288.

neaut: "Old come to pass has come to life again!"[1]

It amounts, we judge, to a historical demonstration that the manuscript story of Solomon Spaulding served as an antecedent and groundwork of the Book of Mormon. Considerable liberty may have been used by Joseph Smith, or by his accomplice, or by both in modifying details and introducing supplementary materials, but that the general framework and wide stretches of the subject-matter of the Book of Mormon were borrowed from Spaulding is not open to reasonable doubt.

This conclusion holds whether or not any reliable evidence is at hand as to the medium through which Joseph Smith was brought into possession of the Spaulding manuscript, or enabled to use its contents very largely in shaping the Book of Mor-

[1] T. Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, p. 449.

mon. As other noted crimes have gone undetected, so might a carefully concealed theft in this connection. But, as a matter of fact, there is evidence as to the medium in question, which, if not demonstrative, affords a basis for a thoroughly probable inference. A sufficient list of data points to Sidney Rigdon as the man who helped Joseph Smith, by supplying him with the highly imaginative story of Spaulding, to pass on from his empty bluff about a Golden Bible to an appearance of a real discovery. That this preacher, who was primarily connected with the Baptists, and then affiliated with the Disciples, was none too conscientious for a performance of this kind, is indicated by the fact of his cooperation with Smith, as mentioned above, in an outrage upon the integrity of the biblical text. That he had opportunity for the knavish performance is certified by his known

access to the printing establishment of Patterson in Pittsburgh. He may not have been employed at any time in that establishment, but it is ascertained that he was on intimate terms with Lambdin, who was with Patterson from 1812 to 1823, and so in all likelihood had means of both knowing about and seeing the Spaulding manuscript. Among the evidences that he improved his chance to get the manuscript into his possession are the following: Joseph Miller of Amity, Pennsylvania, who acted the part of a friend in need to Spaulding in his last days, says he told him "there was a man named Sidney Rigdon about the office [of Patterson], and they thought he had stolen the manuscript."[1] The conviction of Mrs. Spaulding, as expressed a number of years later, that the manuscript was left among the effects of her deceased

[1] Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, p. 442.

husband may be quoted in opposition to this report by Miller; but it is quite possible that she did not know, or had forgotten, the fact that the writing had been sent a second time to the office of Patterson. That Rigdon obtained possession of it is very definitely affirmed by John Winter, M.D. He says that Rigdon showed it to him while in his study in 1822 or 1823. The daughter of Dr. Winter testifies: "I have frequently heard my father speak of Rigdon having Spaulding's manuscript, and that he had gotten it from the printer to read as a curiosity."[1] Mrs. Amos Dunlap in 1826–27, while visiting at the house of Rigdon, saw him reading a manuscript which he was accustomed to keep locked up in a trunk, and heard him say, in response to the impatient remark of his wife that she would like to burn the thing up, "It will

[1] Linn, p. 67; Schroeder, pp. 22, 23.

be a great thing some day."[1] There is no reason for supposing that this was other than the manuscript which Dr. Winter saw in Rigdon's study several years before. The Rev. Adamson Bentley wrote in 1841: "I know that Sidney Rigdon told me there was a book coming out, the manuscript of which had been found engraved on gold plates, as much as two years before the Mormon book made its appearance or had been heard of by me." This statement, though given to the public more than a score of years before the death of Rigdon, was never contradicted by him.[2] How should Rigdon at that date have had knowledge of the prospective forthcoming of the Book of Mormon? Taken in connection with the testimony as to his prior possession of the Spaulding manuscript, and the well-established

[1] Schroeder, p. 24.
[2] Ibid., p. 23.

indebtedness of the Book of Mormon to that writing, Rigdon's forecast is plain historical evidence that he had come into collusion with Joseph Smith and had supplied him with the specified writing as the groundwork of his fabulous Bible. This conclusion is confirmed by evidence that Rigdon was away from home for considerable intervals, and in the neighborhood of Smith, during the period in which the Book of Mormon was being made ready for publication. The remark of V. Rudolph is on record "that during the winter previous to the appearance of the Book of Mormon, Rigdon was in the habit of spending weeks away from his home, going no one knew where."[1] Pomeroy Tucker, who was on the ground at the time, notes that a mysterious stranger was seen at the Smith residence in 1827 and again in 1828.[2]

[1] Mrs. Dickinson, New Light on Mormonism, p. 252.
[2] The Origin of Mormonism, pp. 28, 46.

Abel Chase, a near neighbor of Smith's, reports: "I saw Rigdon at Smith's at different times with considerable intervals between." Lorenzo Saunders, another neighbor, says, "I saw Rigdon at Smith's several times, and the first visit was more than two years before the Book appeared."[1]

To complete the historical demonstration of the complicity of Rigdon with Smith in concocting the Book of Mormon two points need to be added. In the first place, it is to be noticed that a strain of the Campbellite or Disciples' teaching, in which Rigdon had been indoctrinated, pervades the Mormon Bible. Such characteristic features as stress upon immersion as the sole legitimate form of baptism, great emphasis on the efficacy of baptism, while a very moderate view is taken of the virtue of the eucharist, and a rather pro-

[1] Schroeder, p. 30.

nounced expectation of the coming and millennial reign of Christ, are unequivocally reproduced. The second point concerns the subsequent relation of Rigdon to Smith. The former was shown considerable deference and in various relations was treated as only second to Smith. But, on the other hand, he was subjected to such humiliations as a high-spirited man could scarcely have endured who was not rendered comparatively helpless by consciousness of complicity in fraud. So Linn argues with a good show of reason. "The iron hand," he says, "with which Smith repressed Rigdon from the date of their arrival in Ohio affords strong proof of Rigdon's complicity in the Bible plot, and of the fact that he stood to his accomplice in the relation of a burglar to his mate, where the burglar has both the boodle and the secret in his possession."[1]

[1] The Story of the Mormons, p. 132.

As we have taken pains to state, proof of the indebtedness of the Book of Mormon to the romance of Solomon Spaulding is of much greater import than the determination of the question whether Rigdon served as the intermediary between the two writings. We cannot forbear the judgment, however, that the data which make for an affirmative answer to this question are really conclusive.

It should not be overlooked that the Spaulding manuscript enters into the case against Mormonism rather as as auxiliary than as a fundamental. It helps to explain how the young man who was given to the telling of big stories, who made a pretense of handling magical instrumentalities, who contradicted himself in his references to the plates, and who later indulged in capital instances of downright faking, was furnished with the idea, the framework, and to a con-

siderable extent the specific contents of the Book of Mormon. In strictness, however, the supposed function of the given document in originating the Book of Mormon is no necessary basis of an adverse verdict. The proof of fraudulent pretense on the part of Joseph Smith is not dependent upon verifying that function. This will be made to appear in the remainder of this essay, and especially in the section immediately following.

PART II

THE CRITICAL TEST

True

PART II

THE CRITICAL TEST

THE indubitable characteristics of the Book of Mormon afford the most conclusive refutation of the claims of Joseph Smith in relation to its discovery and translation. Should all other lines of evidence be put out of sight, a critical mind would find in the book itself overwhelming proof of its being no antique reality, but a modern fraudulent concoction. The evidences of its recent date permeate the book and are absolutely decisive.

To begin with, in the so-called Book of Mormon things pertaining to the scientific or natural order are given a false and arbitrary setting. The mariner's compass, or an instrument fulfilling an identical purpose, is brought into service six hundred years before

the Christian era.[1] At a time when the sun was universally supposed to move round the earth, the opposite or Copernican theory is represented as being an established truth. "Sure it is the earth that moveth and not the sun."[2] Cows, asses, horses, sheep, swine, and elephants are represented as abounding on American soil.[3] The statement is wide of the truth. At the given date the horse and the elephant existed only as fossil remains of extinct species; and as for cows, sheep, and swine, the nearest of kin to them in the country were the bison, the musk-ox, the big-horn sheep, and the peccary, belonging for the most part to limited districts and incapable of domestication.[4]

[1] Alma, xvii, 12, p. 314; 1 Nephi, v, 4, p. 33. Here, as elsewhere, we cite from the fifth European edition, 1854.

[2] Helaman, iv, 8, p. 421.

[3] 1 Nephi, v, 45, p. 44; Ether, iv, 3, p. 533.

[4] Edward J. Payne, History of the New World Called America, i, 283–290. The statement of Payne relative to the horse and the elephant is made on the authority of Darwin. Recent naturalists have generally been in full agreement with the statement.

In the second place, New Testament events are represented as being anticipated by religious leaders in America with a definiteness and clarity which put to shame the prophetic foresight of the most illuminated of the Old Testament seers. No competent biblical critic in the world could fail to discover that we have here a transcript from the New Testament audaciously set forth as matter of foresight. In scores of particulars this is made evident. The father of Nephi is represented as able to declare at Jerusalem that the Messiah should come in six hundred years; that a messenger, who should acknowledge himself not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoe, should go before him in the wilderness; that this messenger should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; that he should baptize the Messiah, and characterize him as the Lamb of God appointed to take away the sins of

the world.[1] At a period when no saint or sage in Palestine had the least ability to state such things, it is said to have been a matter clearly understood in America that the Messiah would bear the name of "Jesus Christ the Son of God";[2] that his mother would be the Virgin Mary;[3] that he would be scourged and crucified and would rise from the dead on the third day;[4] that his cause would be carried forward by twelve apostles;[5] that one of them, bearing the name of John, should write the Apocalypse,[6] that the law of Moses should cease to be in force after the coming of Christ;[7] and that Israel should be like branches broken off from the olive tree, though destined

[1] 1 Nephi, iii, 3–5, p. 17.
[2] 2 Nephi, xi, 4, p. 97.
[3] Mosiah, i, 14, p. 150; Alma, v, 2, p. 227.
[4] Mosiah, i, 14, p. 150.
[5] 1 Nephi, iii, 19, p. 21.
[6] 1 Nephi, iii, 52, 53, p. 29. The Apocalypse is not named, but clearly enough indicated.
[7] 2 Nephi, xi, 7, p. 97.

later to be grafted in.[1] Respecting some of these things, the apostles were still in need of light after the day of Pentecost. The whole list falls within an horizon in essential contrast with that of Old Testament prediction. From beginning to end it plainly is history set forth by a barefaced fiction as matter of prophetical foresight.

In the third place the claim of the Book of Mormon to be an antique production is squarely refuted by the fact that it is permeated with the phraseology of the King James Version of the Bible, a version that did not exist till about twelve hundred years after the Golden Bible of Joseph Smith, Jr., was presumed to have been deposited in a spot conveniently near to the future residence of the Smith family. This point cannot be better elucidated than in the following words of one who was converted to Mor-

[1] 1 Nephi, iii, 7, p. 18.

monism in youth, but later outgrew it and subjected it to a trenchant criticism: "From page 2 to page 428, pretending to embrace a period from 600 B. C. to A. D., I have counted no less than two hundred and ninety-eight direct quotat ons from the New Testament; some of them paragraphs of verses, some of them sentences from verses. Besides these there are whole chapters of the Old and the New Testament copied verbatim and often not acknowledged."[1] In the face of such an ample borrowing, in respect of phraseology, from the age of the first Stuart King of England, it is no cause for surprise to find such a reminiscence of William Shakespeare as is contained in this expression: "The cold and silent grave whence no traveler can return."[2]

In the fourth place, the Book of

[1] John Hyde, Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs, 1857, pp. 233, 234.

[2] 2 Nephi, i, 3, p. 55.

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Mormon advertises its modern origin by the use of dogmatic phrases and conceptions essentially foreign to an antique Jewish people, but quite at home in evangelical communions of the nineteenth century. It represents such expressions as "the atonement of Christ,"[1] and "the atoning blood of Christ,"[2] as already naturalized before the Christian era. It records the broad dogmatic proposition that nothing short of an infinite atonement will suffice for the sins of the world.[3] It carries back to a remote pre-Christian age the language of modern revivalistic fervor in that it represents Nephi as saying, "I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell."[4] With nearly as flagrant disregard of historic conditions, the Book of Mormon introduces such terms as

[1] Jacob, iii, 4, p. 122.
[2] Mosiah, ii, 1, p. 152.
[3] Alma, xvi, 28, p. 304.
[4] 2 Nephi, xv, p. 113.

church, dissenter, and Bible (in the sense of a collection of sacred books) long before the time in which they are discernible in Jewish usage.[1] Matters of doctrine which ancient Judaism never settled, and in large part never discussed, but which were at the front in interdenominational controversy at the beginning of the nineteenth century are determined with the utmost precision in this pretended translation from long-buried plates. In truth, Alexander Campbell was not chargeable with any great excess of sarcasm when he wrote in 1832: "The prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his Book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies—infant baptism, ordination, the Trinity,

[1] 1 Nephi, i, 36; iii, 33, 40–53, *et passim;* Helaman, iv, 5; 3 Nephi, iii, 5; 2 Nephi, xii, 6, 8.

regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man."[1]

In addition to the glaring displacement of reputed historical matter in these different lines, the Book of Mormon asks us to believe that this continent was the scene of a widely disseminated Jewish, or, rather, Jewish-Christian, civilization for six hundred years, and for a good part of the next four hundred years was the site of a flourishing Christian church which was set forward and furnished with a full quota of apostles by Christ through the medium of a direct personal manifestation. Now, what does archæology

[1] An Analysis of the Book of Mormon, p. 13.

know of a civilization Hebrew in origin and Christian in substance, which flourished on the American continent for the period of a thousand years, and which retained more or less contact with that wing of the immigrants (the so-called Lamanites) that is reputed to have sunk into relative barbarism and to have become what is known as the Indian race? Would it be anything less than an astounding marvel that a people like the Nephites, who remained keenly cognizant of their origin from Jerusalem, and were well advanced in the arts, should have left neither reminiscence of their Judaic descent nor memorial of their Judaic or Christian civilization? But such are the facts. There are, it is true, indications that the semicivilized races of the Aztecs and Peruvians were preceded by peoples who had developed no little skill in architecture. But reliable traces of a Jewish or Christian

civilization on this continent, antedating the European settlement, have never been discovered. At least they have not been discovered by competent, sober-minded, and truth-telling investigators.[1] The entire affluent history of

[1] See D. G. Brinton, On the Various Supposed Relations Between the American and the Asian Races, Reprinted from the Memoirs of the International Congress of Anthropology; also his book on The American Race. Brinton, who ranks among the foremost investigators of Indian antiquities, while expressing appreciation for the learning and industry which such writers as Adair and Kingsborough have expended on the theory of the Hebrew descent of the Indians, makes the emphatic statement: "No one at present would acknowledge himself a believer in this theory" (The American Race, p. 18).

The results attained by the most industrious of Mormon apologists in no wise call for a revision of Brinton's judgment (see B. H. Roberts, New Witness for God, Vols. II and III). The tokens of a prolonged Hebrew civilisation in this country which he is able to adduce reduce to some pieces of parchment bearing Hebrew sentences, found at Pittsfield, and a tablet inscribed with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew, discovered at Newark. Neither of these memorials is proved to be of ancient date; and even if that much could be established in their behalf, the evidence furnished by them for a prolonged Hebrew civilisation in America would amount to nothing as against the opposing evidence contained in the native languages. As well suppose the Latin language to have left no discoverable trace on the speech of Italy as to suppose tribes which were the offshoots of a civilised Hebrew race, and had no vital contact with any other race, to have left no distinct token of their Hebrew antecedents in their language. As to Flood stories analogous to the Hebrew, these were current among peoples antedating the national existence of the Hebrews and furnish no proof even of casual contact with them. The same may be said of the presence of such a figure as Quetsalcoatl in the Aztec, or Toltec,

a thousand years, we must conclude, tapered down to nothing. It accomplished no adequate purpose. Joseph Smith, it is true, would have us believe that the Golden Bible deposited in the hill of Cumorah was a sufficient end to be achieved by the long history. But having already conclusive reasons for rejecting his estimate of that ambitious romance, we find in the wretched abortiveness of the pretended history an additional ground for rating it as a baseless fiction.

Among subsidiary criticisms of the Book of Mormon place may be given to its disagreement with the verdict of recent scholarship on the book of Isaiah. That verdict is that the last twenty-seven chapters of this prophetical book belong to the period of the Babylonish captivity. The Book of

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mythology. Divinities playing an exceptional role are found in other mythologies, as Osiris in the Egyptian and Baldur in the Scandinavian. To explain the Mexican god on the score of the Hebrew antecedents of his worshipers is quite gratuitous.

Mormon, on the other hand, presumes that these chapters were extant some generations before the captivity—having been written by Isaiah the son of Amos—and that they were conveyed to this country by Nephi six hundred years before the Christian era. The revised view of the book of Isaiah has not indeed been universally adopted in learned circles, but the movement of free scholarship toward it for several decades has been very pronounced. So there is at least probable ground for convicting the Book of Mormon of a blunder such as betrays a modern hand in its production.

Of the incredible things in the incredible book which Joseph Smith pretended to have received through angelic ministration no item is perhaps more fantastic than that which recounts the voyage of the Jaredites to America in very peculiarly constructed barges.[1]

[1] Ether, i.

Anyone who can believe this story ought not to feel obliged to challenge the historicity of any of the marvelous tales of Alice in Wonderland.

In addition to all the rest, the claim of the Book of Mormon to a sacred character is discredited by its barrenness. Apart from materials plagiarized from the Bible, it is almost entirely destitute of an edifying content. Its continual iteration in slightly diversified form of two scenes, the one a representation of disobedience and chastisement, and the other containing a description of repentance and renewed opportunity, is terribly wearisome. In its doctrinal teachings it has, to be sure, a number of respectable tenets; but the doctrines inculcated are not above the level of the contemporary theology from which we are authorized to regard them as borrowed, and in one particular there is a descent to the plane of the most aberrant think-

ing of the time. We refer to the singular notion that the transgression of Adam was one of the most necessary and salutary events that ever happened, since otherwise the race would have continued in a perfectly static, poverty-stricken, and joyless condition.[1]

Mormon apologists are wont to make large account of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, or to the reality of the plates on which the book was alleged to have been based. But against the accumulated evidence which has been presented what can the testimony of the witnesses prove? Plainly nothing, except that the witnesses were deceived, or were partners in deceit, or were the subjects, to a greater or less extent, of both orders of experience.

The witnesses fall into two groups, the first of which consisted of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, and the second of eight per-

[1] 2 Nephi, i, 8, pp. 58, 59.

sons, all of whom, with the exception of Hiram Page, belonged to either the Whitmer or the Smith family. These men, it is to be noticed, with scarcely an exception, were so closely associated with the pseudo prophet in his Golden Bible project, almost from its inception, that they might with a fair degree of propriety be styled his confederates in that project. Further, it is to be noticed that their testimony is not given in the form of personal affidavits. The three and the eight subscribed respectively to statements which undoubtedly Smith, or his principal accomplice, had drawn up for them, and it is legitimate to suppose that with their uncritical turn of mind even the most honest among them did not scrutinize closely the terms of the statements.

The witnesses of the first group testified that they were shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by

an angel, and saw the writing engraved upon them, and were assured by the voice of God that it had been correctly translated. How the voice of God imparted this information, whether through an inward impression or otherwise, is not stated. The door is left open to the supposition that the wish to accredit the Book of Mormon was the effective source of the voice. As respects the angel bearing the plates, he would seem to have belonged rather to the sphere of subjective fancy than to that of objective reality. Smith in his report of the matter admits that Harris experienced difficulty in getting the vision of the angel and the plates and, moreover, stops short of squarely affirming that he really obtained the vision[1]; and Harris too, when questioned as to whether he saw the reported objects with his literal sight, felt obliged to

[1] Millennial Star, vol. xiv, supt., p. 19; cited by Linn, p. 80.

reply that it was by the spiritual eye or the eye of faith.[1] Of the remaining two witnesses David Whitmer was doubtless at that stage, being exceedingly visionary, a good subject for hypnotic suggestion. That his experience may have been of this order is suggested by the fact that the vision, instead of being imposed upon neutral subjects, was wrought out in the woods by prayer and stress. On the score of natural eyesight there is no apparent reason why he should have seen what the physical eyes of Harris could not discover. As to Oliver Cowdery, who had acted as Smith's secretary in preparing the Book of Mormon, he was too closely allied with his principal not to be able to testify to seeing what he was desired to see. It is not improbable that he was a conscious partner in the fraud which was being perpetrated. His after

[1] Tucker, The Rise of Mormonism, p. 71.

career proves that he was a man of very shifty character. In 1838 the Mormons cast him out under charges of being a thief, swindler, liar, and counterfeiter.[1] At the same date they forced out David Whitmer and painted his character also in black. Harris too was consigned to the outer darkness. In 1837 Smith reviled him as a Negro with a white skin, and the next year denounced him as a "liar and swindler."[2] The worth of a judicial sentence cannot, of course, be attached to these verdicts. While Cowdery was doubtless a knave, we are not forbidden to believe that Whitmer and Harris were weak and wrong-headed rather than unprincipled. But the group as a whole reduces, on examination, to a rather beggarly set of witnesses.

The second group, made up of eight witnesses, testify simply that they were

[1] Linn, p. 81.
[2] Ibid., p. 84; Gregg, p. 24.

shown the plates by Joseph Smith, Jr., and handled with their own hands as many of the plates as the said Smith had translated. The latter statement, it may be observed, could be signed by the most radical disbeliever in the reputed origin of the Book of Mormon. As to being shown the plates, that is quite a different thing from having any guaranty as to the character or content of the writing engraved upon them. In fact, the testimony of this whole group of witnesses furnishes no evidence that plates serving as a real basis of the Book of Mormon were in existence. Supposing plates to have been actually seen and handled, the only rational conclusion would be that they were devised for the occasion; and for witnesses drawn from the Smith and Whitmer families we can be assured that a very clumsy device would have answered the purpose. It would not have needed any-

thing so well executed as the Kinderhook plates referred to above. It may be worth adding that three of this group finally abandoned Mormonism. Plainly the evidence with which they had been favored was not sufficient to rivet their minds to the Mormon system. Of the five remaining members of the group three belonged to the Smith family. It appears, therefore, that, apart from that family, only two in the entire list of witnesses who signed the statements dictated by Joseph Smith remained steadfast adherents of Mormonism. It may not be on record that those who fell away formally withdrew their testimony; but naturally they would not be forward to confess themselves to have been either dupes or knaves.

That Smith might easily have imposed upon the untrained and credulous men whom he selected as witnesses is suggested by the case of James

J. Strang, who joined the Mormons shortly before the assassination of Smith, in 1844, and who went on to supervise an independent community at Voree, Wisconsin, which later was transferred to Beaver Island in Lake Michigan. Conceiving that some antique plates would make a suitable embellishment for his prophetical mission, he set about to supply them, and later to translate the characters engraved upon them by the aid of urim and thummim alleged to have been brought to him by an angel. Nor did he fail to obtain his witnesses. Four men testified that, digging according to his direction, they found the plates. The names of these witnesses are recorded as Aaron Smith, J. B. Wheelan, James M. Van Nostrand, and Edward Whitcomb.[1] If Strang could thus play a successful ruse, why not Joseph Smith likewise?

[1] Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, pp. 312–319.

Quite enough space has been given to the so-called "witnesses." As was noted, their testimony, in the face of the overwhelming evidence on the origin and character of the Book of Mormon, can only show that either they were deceived, or were partners in deceit, or belonged, to a greater or less extent, both to the class of dupes and to that of deceivers.

Since Joseph Smith is convicted of imposture both by the evidence bearing on the production of the Book of Mormon and by the contents of that book, his claim to a prophetical vocation is completely nullified in the sight of history as to its primary and basal credential; and, being proved guilty of fraudulent pretense in this capital matter, he is entitled to no sort of credence in connection with the subsequent "revelations" of which he claimed to be the mouthpiece. It may be worth while, however, to take

a glance at these so-called revelations which have been gathered together in the book constituting the second great authority of the Mormons, The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

It can hardly escape the notice of the reader that in respect of form the "revelations" are not adapted to suggest a divine source. There is in them a large element of rambling sermonic discourse. A wordy religiosity, a mechanical stringing together of phrases, pictorial representations, and conceptions borrowed from the Bible, is nearly everywhere in evidence. There is rarely a direct approach to, or an economical dealing with, the real point which the revelation was designed to enforce. In short, the style of the revelations implies that the Lord who gave them must have been singularly lacking in business capacity.

Again the subject-matter of many

of the revelations is adapted to provoke the smile of incredulity. Things of trivial import, matters which ordinary common sense and decent executive ability might be regarded as competent to dispose of, are paraded with the solemn sanction of divine mandates. The borders of the burlesque are sometimes approached, not to say plainly crossed over, as, for instance, in the revelation ordering the details of a stock company and the erection of a boarding house at Nauvoo.[1]

Again, the tenor of one and another revelation makes a mock of divine knowledge and foresight. A conspicuous example appears in the divine message dated May, 1829. This was in response to the exigency which had arisen through the loss of a considerable parcel of manuscript containing the first part of the so-called translation of the Book of Mormon. In response

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxiv.

to the persistent request of Martin Harris he was given permission to show the curious pages to his wife and a few others. The inclusion of the wife was a poor mark of discretion. Utterly averse to her husband's assumption of financial responsibility for what she regarded as an insane and wicked project she took pains to insure that the manuscript should never see the light again. At least this is the probable conclusion. To be sure, Mrs. Harris was able to deny that she had burned up the vanished pages. But that is by no means equivalent to asserting that they passed beyond her custody; and the fact that no trace was ever gained of what would naturally have been conserved as a curiosity by anyone in a less intense mood than Mrs. Harris makes for the conclusion that they did not pass outside of her jurisdiction. By this outcome Joseph Smith was thrown into a

quandary. He knew that his magic spectacles were not equal to supplying an exact duplicate of the lost pages, and he was haunted by the suspicion that those pages might be brought forward, in case their subject-matter should be given out a second time, to convict him of false pretense. So he availed himself of a "revelation" which warned him that designing men had planned to change and pervert the contents of the missing pages, and directed him to substitute other matter for that which they contained.[1] But how could these designing men tamper with the writing on the specified pages without leaving the marks of their tampering? and how could they expect to accomplish anything without producing the precise manuscript which Harris took away and which was in his own handwriting? How could they make an abusive use of a manuscript

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, x.

which all the known facts indicate was beyond the use or abuse of any party outside the Harris domicile? Manifestly, the Lord who dictated the given revelation had no knowledge of the actual conditions.

Still further, the pretended revelations contain a sufficient quota of predictions which the course of events has stamped as empty vaporings. Thus, in 1832, the solemn declaration was made: "Not many days hence the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man, and the sun shall hide his face."[1] An equally poor venture in prophesying was made when Smith sent a messenger to New York, Albany, and Boston, to warn the people of those cities that, in case of their rejecting the things announced, their utter desolation was impending and the hour of their judgment was nigh.[2]

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, lxxxviii, 87.
[2] Ibid., lxxxiv, 112–115.

Truly ridiculous is that revelation made to appear which appointed John Whitmer historian,[1] when it is joined with the subsequent dismissal of the appointee with this contemptuous characterization of him by Smith and Rigdon: "We never supposed you capable of writing a history."[2] A reference might also be made to the prediction that the discomfited Latter Day Saints in Missouri should forthwith begin to prevail against their enemies,[3] though in this instance a chance was prudently reserved to lay the blame of the unmitigated disaster which ensued to the misconduct of the Saints.

That a man much given to prophesying should occasionally make an approach to picturing a future unfoldment is no ground for surprise. We are therefore far from discovering in Joseph Smith's alleged prediction respecting

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, xlvii.
[2] Millennial Star, xvi, p. 133; cited by Linn, p. 114.
[3] Doctrine and Covenants, ciii, 6.

the Civil War any token of prophetical vocation.[1] Not to emphasize the fact that the prediction seems not to have been published till long after its ostensible date (December 25, 1832), it could easily have been suggested by the slavery agitation going on at that time, and especially by the nullification ordinance of South Carolina, which was passed in that very year and was a matter for earnest discussion at the time the revelation purports to have been given. Moreover, the forecast of the Civil War was conjoined with prognostications that had no fulfillment. What really is disclosed here is a pretender whose venture happened to be partially successful.

Among the revelations which are alleged to have been vouchsafed to the founder of Mormonism there is none which so effectually wrecks his claims as that in authorization of

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, lxxxvii.

polygamy. Its very content is a fundamental refutation of those claims. But that is a point for subsequent consideration. What we need to note in this connection is the flagrant self-contradiction which it involved. In the Book of Mormon, a writing reputed to be in its original form almost too sacred for the sight of mortal eyes, we have this unequivocal condemnation and prohibition of polygamy: "Behold David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. . . . Wherefore I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore my brethren hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord; for there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; for I the Lord God delighteth in the chastity of women."[1]

[1] Jacob, ii, 6, p. 118.

Furthermore, in the Book of Mormon, the Lamanites, though represented as justly abhorred for serious offenses, are emphatically commended for their avoidance of polygamy and concubinage. Because of this one virtue it is declared of them, "the Lord God will not destroy them, and one day they shall become a blessed people."[1] Twice over in reputed revelations Smith used language, in 1831, which implies the standpoint of monogamy. What else, taken as honest speech, can these sentences mean? "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else."[2] "Marriage is ordained of God unto man; wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh."[3] In face of all this, in a revelation bearing date of July 12,

[1] Jacob, ii, 9, p. 119.
[2] Doctrine and Covenants, xlii, 22.
[3] Ibid., xlix, 15, 16.

1843 (but first published at Salt Lake City in 1852), the license of David and Solomon is approved, plain authorization is given to the multiplying of wives to any extent that may suit a man's convenience and pleasure, and destruction is threatened against Emma Smith, the first wife of Joseph, unless she should desist from her opposition to the polygamous scheme.[1] What less is this than a virtual confession of the pseudo prophet that his claim to derive his oracles from the Lord was a lying pretense? The deliverance at Nauvoo in 1843 simply negates the Book of Mormon as well as the revelations of 1831. No wit of man can reconcile them, and it does not appear that Joseph Smith made the attempt. According to the credible report of William Law, who was at one time a trusted associate, when charged with contradicting the Book

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxxii.

of Mormon in his revelation on plural marriage, he replied: "O, that was given when the church was in its infancy; then it was all right to feed the people on milk, but now it is necessary to give them strong meat."[1] The frivolous makeshift may have served a temporary purpose; but of course it sanctions a contemptuous treatment of the authority of the Book of Mormon. If a solemn injunction of that book on a matter of capital importance, and formally assuming to mend the imperfection of antique practice, can be stigmatized as infantile diet, why may not any other portion of the book be set aside under the same disparaging category? To one who has eyes to see it is plain enough that Smith overruled and trampled under foot his earlier deliverances simply because his lust was for him more imperious than the claims of

[1] Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, p. 515.

self-consistency. That people can believe in him in spite of this crookedness only adds another to the historic proofs of the possibilities of human credulity

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PART III

THE RATIONAL TEST

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PART III

THE RATIONAL TEST

In a rational point of view Mormonism is discredited by the superstitious and intemperate appeal of the founder to the instrumentality of magic. What well-informed person can believe that either the peep-stone found in the well of Willard Chase, or the prisms dignified with the name of *urim and thummim*, had any virtue to transfer Reformed Egyptian into English? The English of the first edition of the Book of Mormon was indeed execrable at various points; but to suppose that an antique language can be transformed into any kind of English by means of bits of mineral substance is to canonize the queer. Doubtless by gazing fixedly into a crystal an im-

pressible subject can be thrown into a state of reverie, as he can also by gazing fixedly at the tip of his nose; but neither the crystal nor the tip of the nose ever qualifies for translating an absolutely unknown tongue into one's vernacular. Smith's pretense that he was supplied with the venerable Israelite instrument, the urim and thummim, in no wise alleviates the incredible magic involved in the alleged transaction. For the scholarly verdict is that the use of urim and thummim among the Israelites was only a solemn form of casting lots, a means of deciding between the simple alternatives of yes and no. Any such virtue as the Mormon prophet attached to this instrumentality does not come into view. Moreover, the fact is to be emphasized that in the great prophetical era of Israel no recourse seems to have been had to urim and thummim. The lofty-minded men who

had a well-grounded confidence that the Spirit of God wrought in them had no use for such insensate tools as are claimed to have been employed in the origination of the Book of Mormon.[1]

The appeal which Mormon apologists have made to the marvels of science, in justification of the efficacy of such things as peep-stones and prisms, is entirely irrelevant. Science has been able to achieve real results by accommodation to the actual constitution of the world. Ten thousand years of dabbling with such instrumentalities as are reputed to have served Joseph Smith would be as utterly abortive as have been the efforts of the pseudo science of astrology through its long history. It should be noted, further, that our apologists come very near to admitting that Smith's accomplishment

[1] See article, "Urim and Thummim," in Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible.

of his task by means of mineral "translators" was an empty pretense. One and another of them, in attempting to explain the undeniable characteristics of the Book of Mormon, have felt obliged to affirm for their prophet a pretty wide range of free mental activity. How instruments that act mechanically can enter into partnership with the free movements of a human mind they have not explained. A man can see his face when he gazes into a looking-glass; but it would be a very extraordinary looking-glass which could become an effective partner in the free working out of a great mental program. In short, our apologists, besides contradicting the interpretation put upon the matter by Smith's contemporaries, manifestly hazard the sacrifice of one interest in attempting to cover another: they invite to skepticism as to the fact of the urim and thummim having played

any part in the so-called translation.

A criticism scarcely less scathing holds against the procedure attributed to the Lord in relation to the plates of the Book of Mormon. Why should he have been so wonderfully concerned to keep them hidden away from human sight? Apart from the message which they contained, what were the plates but old metal? and, when once the message had been transcribed, of what possible use could they be except as an accessible test of the fidelity with which the transcription, or translation, had been made? To charge the Lord with keeping them out of sight on the score of their sacredness is to charge him with patronizing an arrant fetishism. Things are sacred in proportion to their fulfillment of useful offices. Old metal hidden away from sight is fruitful of no worthful result whatever.

God could not possibly have any motive for the hiding. The motive was altogether with Joseph Smith. The rational inference is that he represented the plates as forbidden to the sight of men just because he had no plates, at least none that could endure critical inspection for the briefest interval.

Passing on to more general grounds of rational objection to Mormonism, we notice the artificial basis of authority which it imports by its intemperate stress upon isolated divine workings, upon baldly supernatural or quasi-supernatural interventions. No doubt supernatural workings may be so harmoniously interwoven with other contents of a great historical system as to be a valuable factor in the total evidence for the system. But a cordial admission of this fact in no wise excludes occasion to challenge the rating of the formally supernatural which is characteristic of Mormonism. It

virtually ignores the great truth that the Holy Spirit may be operative in and through the historic process, and thereby bring forth most precious and substantial results. In the advancing and deepening convictions which lift civilizations up to a purer ideal it is disinclined to see any token of divine revelation. God must break into the world by a formal manifestation and give a formal message through a specific mouthpiece, or he must stay out of the world and keep silence. This point of view is conspicuous in various deliverances of Mormon writers. Let the following serve as examples: "If no one man can know a minister of God without revelation, then no large body of men can know him; and, surely, they cannot testify of what they do not know. No matter what is said against Joseph Smith, or who, or how many say it, or however *credible* the witnesses, they are not

competent to testify, because they have not the gift of revelation."[1] "One thing is certain; if the angel has not come—if the gospel is not restored—if the records of Joseph are not revealed, then there is no kingdom of God on earth, no authority to preach or administer ordinances among men."[2]

On the basis from which such statements proceed no historical evolution can carry any weight as against a specific utterance of a man who has been credited with a prophetical vocation and assumes to speak in the name of the Lord. For example, by virtue of a growing insight into the proper application of gospel principles a universal consensus may be worked out in Christian minds as to the essential wrong and injustice of human

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[1] Orson Spencer, Letters on the Most Prominent Doctrines, Letter ii, 1847, pp. 45, 46.

[2] Orson Pratt, Series of Pamphlets, No. I, p. 8.

slavery; that, we are asked to believe, is of no significance. It is destitute of all divine authority. The pronouncement of one fulfilling the role of a prophet can nullify the whole consensus and obligate to a contrary judgment. God works out nothing through the historic evolution. All depends upon the edict voiced by the professional spokesman. This, to all appearance, is the ruling point of view in Mormonism, and it is glaringly exhibited in connection with the doctrine of polygamy. By virtue of the monogamic ideal which shines forth from the biblical revelation (in spite of its record of polygamous practice in certain instances), by respect for the great principle of equality of male and female in Christ, by an irrepressible sense of the injustice of condemning a devoted wife to take up with the mere fraction of a husband, by a recognition of the natural conditions

of true heart devotion and real conjugal unity, Christians came universally to condemn polygamy and to cast it out as incompatible with a decent civilization. All that, from the Mormon standpoint, counts for nothing. Joseph Smith said that he had a revelation legitimating polygamy, and his word ends the matter. God demonstrated his will in this so-called revelation. In the working out and deep implantation in a Christian civilization of the family ideal his will in no wise came to expression.

The theory is so narrow-gauge, and so opens the door to noxious impositions, that manifestly it falls quite outside the pale of rational approval. Moreover, in its application by Mormons to the point before us there is an altogether gratuitous element. Even if constrained to hold in theory that the specific utterance of a prophet is the one thing that carries weight,

why should they attach a decisive authority to the revelation of Smith in favor of polygamy, standing as it does in contradiction to previous revelations of his and to the plain text of the Book of Mormon? Why not take this aberrant revelation as a proof that, if ever he was called to the prophetical office, he had turned truant to his calling and become an instrument of seduction? What less than extraordinary blindness could exclude the choice of this alternative? So the Mormons are guilty of a double blunder in this matter. They hold a one-sided and artificial premise respecting the method of divine working and divine revelation, and they make a gratuitous and aberrant application of that premise.

A narrowness quite as flagrant as that just noticed appears in the utter disparagement which exponents of Mormonism have been wont to visit

upon the Christian world at large and in the crying up of their own system as possessed of sole legitimacy. Often enough in the course of history a bigoted self-appreciation has been exhibited, and illustration has been given of the besetting sin of religious society by the claim of this or that party to possess a monopoly of spiritual goods. There is good reason, however, to conclude that no one of these parties, even the most eccentric, has surpassed the Mormons in the given respect. The founder set the standard of self-appreciation at the highest notch by representing that God Almighty was entirely subservient to his scheme, and bound to bless whomsoever he might bless, and to curse whomsoever he might curse.[1] What Joseph Smith claimed for himself Mormon preachers and writers have often claimed for their sect. They have asserted a

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxxii, 47.

monopoly of divine interest and favor for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and have stigmatized the Christian world at large as an apostate and God-forsaken domain. It is bold impudence, contends Orson Pratt, for the non-Mormon churches to call themselves Christian churches. "They have nothing to do with Christ, neither has Christ anything to do with them, only to pour out upon them the plagues written. . . . All who will not now repent, as the authority is once more restored to the earth, and come forth out of the corrupt apostate churches and be adopted into the Church of Christ and earnestly seek after the blessings and miraculous gifts of the gospel shall be thrust down to hell, saith the Lord God of Hosts."[1] "Modern Christianity," writes Orson Spencer, "is the very opposite extreme and counterpart

[1] Series of Pamphlets, No. III, p. 8; No. V, p. 8.

of the ancient order of apostles and prophets. . . . The very *religion* of modern Christianity is about as great a curse as can be inflicted upon its possessors without doing violence to their power of agency. . . . The reign of Satan for near eighteen hundred years has almost effaced every relic of Bible truth from the earth."[1] Now and then doubtless a Mormon has spoken a charitable word respecting the character and fate of those in outside Gentilism. Brigham Young showed himself capable of doing that.[2] But, on the other hand, he made this emphatic declaration: "Every spirit that does not confess that God sent Joseph Smith, and revealed the everlasting gospel to and through him, is of Antichrist, no matter what it professes with regard to revealed religion and the account that is given of the

[1] Letters Exhibiting the Most Prominent Doctrines, pp. 79, 140, 207, 208.

[2] Journal of Discourses, viii, pp. 36, 154.

Saviour and his Father in the Bible. They may say that they acknowledge him until doomsday, and he will never own them, nor bestow the Holy Spirit upon them, and they will never have visions of eternity opened to them unless they acknowledge that Joseph Smith is sent of God."[1] Of kindred import is the following sentence from the lips of this Mormon president: "The moment a person decides to leave this people, he is cut off from every object that is durable for time and eternity."[2] "We are standing here," said John Taylor, "as the representatives of God, and the only true representatives he has upon earth."[3] In a like vein are the statements in a Mormon catechism which affirm that there can be only one Church of Christ in the world, and take pains to describe this one Church in a way

[1] Journal of Discourses, viii, pp. 176, 177.
[2] Ibid., iv, p. 31.
[3] Ibid., v, p. 87.

which identifies it with the Mormon.[1]

As will be shown when we come to treat of its sacerdotal phase, Mormonism claims a vast preeminence as possessing the one legitimate priesthood through whose offices alone heirship to the full glory of the eternal kingdom is possible. Those destitute of those offices must remain everlastingly in a comparatively servile rank.

The holders of such a lien on God and such a monopoly of his kingdom ought certainly to furnish tremendous credentials. Where are these to be found? Our review has shown that Mormonism in the conditions of its origin presents the reverse of a credential, and facts yet to be stated will indicate that its after history furnishes no compensation for this formidable drawback. The appeal to signs and wonders, so prominent in Mormon

[1] Catechism for Children by Elder John Jaques.

apologetics, amounts to nothing substantial. Numerous modern parties have made the same appeal, and, so far as discoverable, with equal right. Take, as examples, the Roman Church at Lourdes and other shrines, the Dowieites, Christian Scientists, Faith-healers, and others. The number of competitors does not permit that the Mormon Church should find in that range any proof of lofty preeminence and sole legitimacy. What we have is not proof, but boasting, and such boasting as a man of insight and experience would expect to find only where a combination of ignorance and fanaticism prevails. A Church that has been so nearly powerless to emulate the wealth of the Christian world in a deeply spiritual literature and in shining examples of piety simply makes itself ridiculous when it puts a ban upon Christendom and claims a monopoly of the kingdom of God on earth.

Passing on to prominent features in the doctrinal system of Mormonism, we find a basis of refutation in its materialism, its polytheism, its phallicism, and its rank sacerdotalism.

The founder supplied a very comprehensive basis for the materialistic phase of the Mormon system. Not only did he proclaim the doctrine, so constantly repeated by his followers down to this day, that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's,"[1] but he ruled out spirit as distinct from matter. These are his words: "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes. We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter."[2] Orson Pratt, reputed to have been the most scholarly man among the early Mormons, wrote at length in

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxx, 22.
[2] Ibid., cxxxi, 7, 8.

support of this all-inclusive materialism. "The Father," he declared, "is a material being. The substance of which he is composed is wholly material."[1] Like descriptions were applied by him to the Son and the Holy Spirit; and, speaking of Deity in general, he made it to consist of particles detached to a greater or less degree from each other by intervening spaces.[2] Later writers may have shown less boldness than Orson Pratt in advocating the materialistic creed; still as recent a writer as James E. Talmage has penned this sentence: "I submit that to deny the materiality of God's person is to deny God, for a thing without parts has no whole, and an immaterial body cannot exist."[3]

While perfectly free to assign a body of specific dimensions to God the Father, Mormons have felt a degree

[1] Series of Pamphlets, No. II, p. 4.
[2] Ibid., The First Great Cause, p. 12.
[3] The Articles of Faith, 1899, p. 43.

of hesitation to apply the like description to the Holy Spirit. In so far, however, as they have respected the dictum of Joseph Smith on the non-existence of pure spirit, they have been under practical compulsion to ascribe a body to the Holy Spirit, only one of a vague sort, like a widely extended vapor, gas, ether, or peculiar species of fluid. Orson Pratt defines it as a widely diffused complex of particles. "No two persons," he says, "can receive the same identical particles of this Spirit at the same instant; a part therefore of the Holy Spirit will rest upon one man, and another part will rest upon another."[1] Parley P. Pratt speaks of the Holy Spirit as "a divine substance or fluid."[2] As represented by Nels L. Nelson, the Holy Spirit is a universal force, serving to God as a medium through which he may act

[1] Series of Pamphlets, Absurdities of Immaterialism, p. 24.
[2] Key to the Science of Theology, p. 29.

throughout a wide range, though in person he is confined to a definite place.[1] In other words, he identifies the Holy Spirit with an impersonal cosmic energy, and assigns to his anthropomorphic deity a greater or less ability to direct this energy.

The materialistic phase of Mormonism makes a congenial basis for the polytheistic phase. A god who is nothing more than a parcel of matter, subject to the limitations of body, and having occasion to move from place to place, is neither so high in nature nor so inclusive but that he may very well have many associates. So the Mormons were prompt to infer. With marked decision they espoused a pronounced polytheism. Joseph Smith may not have said much on this subject. He gave, however, an adequate suggestion in this sentence, spoken in the temple at Nauvoo, April 6, 1844:

[1] Scientific Aspects of Mormonism, pp. 49, 50.

"You have got to learn to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you."[1] In equivalent terms Brigham Young declared, "The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming gods like himself."[2] In a Mormon catechism we have this question and answer: "Are there more gods than one? Yes, many."[3] A writer ambitious to demonstrate the scientific character of Mormonism rejects the supposition of a supreme First Cause and substitutes a line of perfected psychic beings or gods, reaching back indefinitely.[4] Each one of these beings, he assumes, attained to godhood by a process of development. "As man, God once was; as God is, man may become." The scheme seems to confront us with such a multiplicity

[1] Journal of Discourses, vi, p. 4.

[2] Ibid., iii, p. 93. Compare P. P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology, pp. 32–37.

[3] Catechism for Children by Jaques.

[4] Nels L. Nelson, Scientific Aspects of Mormonism, pp. 237, 262.

of gods as threatens to be wearisome to contemplate. But our author offers a species of relief by suggesting that in practice it may be legitimate and wise to center our attention upon the God who presides in our corner of the universe, the God of the biblical revelation. This God he supposes to occupy now a high position, though necessarily "before he attained to godhood, he passed through mutations such as are inevitable in a course of psychic evolution."[1] As beginning at an initial point and growing up, the God thus acknowledged does not appear to be remote in type from the Adam of whom Brigham Young said: "He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do."[2] The cited author, however, is not inclined to adopt President Young's

[1] Page 273. Compare B. H. Roberts, New Witness for God, 1911, I, pp. 467, 468, 473.

[2] Journal of Discourses, I, p. 50.

doctrine of the Adam God without a qualification.[1]

The next phase of Mormon doctrine which we are to consider—its pronounced phallicism, or stress on physical procreation—is not without a distinct affiliation with the phase just reviewed. A god who is only an advanced man, and who is possessed in the most literal sense of bodily organs, might conceivably gain a numerous progeny by ordinary generation. Possibly the anthropomorphic conception of Deity would not by itself have enthroned the supposition that his agency in producing children is of the given type. But when once polygamy became a dominant interest among Mormons, there was naturally a tendency to rival the most pronounced phallic system of the pagan world in stress on the procreative function of the gods. We are not greatly sur-

[1] Pp. 293, 294.

prised, therefore, to hear Brigham Young declaring of God, "He created man as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation."[1] Language as blunt as this may not often occur in Mormon writings; but the point of view which it asserts has not lacked expression. It appears in B. H. Roberts's comment on the teaching of Joseph Smith as meaning "that man is the offspring of Deity, not in any mystical sense, but actually; that man has not only a Father in heaven, but a mother also."[2] Other statements as little ambiguous can be found.[3]

The zeal for polygamy which gained hospitality for such a picture of Deity became controlling in the Mormon hierarchy. By a rapid development the doctrine of plural marriage advanced to a position of exceptional emphasis. Brigham Young showed how

[1] Journal of Discourses, xi, p. 122.
[2] New Witness for God, 1911, i, p. 457.
[3] See J. D. Nutting, The Private Doctrines of Mormon Theology.

deeply his mind was imbued with the doctrine when he declared that if his women should leave him, "he would go and search up others, it being the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can."[1] Not less significant of his mental attitude on this subject is the following: "If I be made the king and lawgiver to my family, and I have many sons, I shall become the father of many fathers, for they will have sons, and so on, from generation to generation; and in this way I may become the father of many fathers and the king of many kings. In this way we can become King of kings and Lord of lords, or Father of fathers, or Prince of princes; and this is the only course, for another man is not going to raise up a kingdom to you."[2] Giving expression to

[1] Journal of Discourses, iv, p. 56.
[2] Ibid., iii, p. 266.

the imperative nature of his polygamous tenet, the Mormon president added, "If any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned." For one confessing himself a Mormon not to believe in polygamy, said Orson Pratt, is utterly absurd. "A person might as well say, 'I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not believe in him.' "[1] "This doctrine of eternal union of husband and wife and of plural marriage," asserted Joseph F. Smith, "is one of the most important doctrines ever revealed to man or any age of the world. Without it man would come to a full stop; without it we never could be exalted to associate with and become gods."[2] "I bear my testimony," said George Teasdale, "that plural marriage is as true as any principle which has been

[1] Journal of Discourses, October 7, 1874, xvii, 224.
[2] Ibid., December 7, 1879, xxi, p. 10.

revealed from the heavens. I bear my testimony that it is a necessity, and that the Church of Christ in its fullness never existed without it. Where you have the eternity of marriage you are bound to have plural marriage."[1] Polygamy is not a theme naturally fruitful of poetic inspiration. A Mormon hymnist, however, has succeeded in expressing his zeal for this part of his creed in rhyme as follows:

Through him who holds the sealing power,
Ye faithful ones, who heed
Celestial laws, take many wives,
And rear a righteous seed.
Though fools revile, I'll honor you
As Abraham, my friend:
You shall be gods, and shall be blest
With lives that never end.[2]

Thus the Mormon hierarchy have given complete demonstration of their

[1] Journal of Discourses, January 13, 1884, xxv, p. 21.
[2] Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs, seventeenth edition, Liverpool, 1881, No. 326.

conviction that polygamy belongs in the very foundation of their system. It is much too basal to be dislodged. To renounce it would be like tearing out the corner stone. The agreement to give up the *practice* of polygamy which, in 1895, was put into the constitution of Utah as a condition of Statehood by no means implied a renunciation of the *doctrine* of polygamy; and after-events have powerfully confirmed the suspicion that the purpose to give up the *practice* was not seriously entertained by a portion of the hierarchy.

In sacerdotal assumptions, or stress on priestly prerogatives, Mormonism is not distanced by any rival known to history. As was indicated above, it claims that only through the good offices of its priesthood can men attain to the full glory and felicity of the heavenly estate. This high destiny, Joseph Smith clearly asserted, can be

reached only through marriage for eternity, and marriage for eternity can be validly consummated only through the instrumentality of those who hold the keys of priesthood.[1] As many as have not availed themselves of this instrumentality, says Parley P. Pratt, "will remain in a *single state* in their saved condition, to all eternity, without the joys of eternal union with the other sex, and consequently without a crown, without a kingdom, without the power to increase. Hence they are angels, and are not gods; and are ministering spirits, or servants, in the employ and under the direction of the Royal Family of Heaven—the Princes, Kings, and Priests of Eternity."[2]

A hierarchy which thus claimed the right to reach its hand into the eternal world was not likely to be very modest in respect of its prerogatives to super-

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxxii, 15–20.
[2] Key to the Science of Theology, p. 173.

vise this present world. Within the community of Latter Day Saints it claimed a practically unlimited authority. Heber C. Kimball spoke as a faithful representative of the hierarchy when he told his hearers that they were clay to be molded according to the dictation of the presiding potter. "I have," he said, "to do the work he tells me to do, and you have to do the same. . . . If Brother Brigham tells me to do a thing, it is the same as though the Lord told me to do it. This is the course for you and every other saint to take."[1] That the Mormon president thought as well of his authority as did his priestly associate is evinced by this utterance: "No man need judge me. You know nothing about it, whether I am sent or not; furthermore, it is none of your business, only to listen with open ears to what

[1] Journal of Discourses, i, p. 161.

is taught you and to serve God with an undivided heart."[1]

The community of Latter Day Saints was far from constituting the whole earthly domain over which the Mormon priesthood claimed the right of sovereign control. It asserted that it stood above all earthly powers, and was vested with full authority to direct them. "The priesthood," wrote Parley P. Pratt, "holds the power and the right to give laws and commandments to individuals, churches, rulers, nations and the world; to appoint, ordain, and establish constitutions and kingdoms; to appoint kings, presidents, governors, or judges, and to ordain and anoint them to their several callings; also to instruct, warn, and reprove them by the word of the Lord."[2] "Some people," observed John Taylor, "ask, What is priesthood? I answer, It is the

[1] Journal of Discourses, i, p. 341.
[2] Key to the Science of Theology, pp. 66, 67.

legitimate rule of God, whether in heaven or on the earth; and it is the only legitimate power that has a right to rule upon the earth; and when the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, no other power will bear rule."[1] So runs the oft-repeated claim of the Mormon hierarchy. A medieval pope never magnified ecclesiastical authority in terms more emphatic than those which this boastful priesthood has employed in description of its own prerogatives. The record which it has made in ordering the political conduct of its votaries, striking as that is, affords but a very partial illustration of the sovereignty over mundane affairs which it has described as belonging to itself by right.

To state these features of Mormon teaching is to judge them in the sight of an enlightened philosophy and theology. The materialized and humanized

[1] Journal of Discourses, v, p. 187.

conception of God, or, rather, of a plurality of gods, which is put forward, provides for no ultimate or universal sovereignty. Beings who grow up to godhood from small manlike beginnings, and who are limited in space, fall utterly short of the requisite endowments for real lordship over the universe. They are simply finite factors in a historic evolution. They are grounded in and subordinate to an impersonal cosmos, which imposes upon them the laws to which they must conform in order to attain to godhood. As compared with the Supreme Being recognized in Christian philosophy and theology, who is the veritable Creator and Lord of the universe, they are a paltry substitute for God. And not only are they poverty-stricken in respect of majesty and sovereign power; they furnish no intelligible basis of that unity which the mind requires for its satisfaction when contemplating

the wonderfully complex and wonderfully ordered universe. The coordinating One, philosophically requisite for a real cosmos, or harmonious system, is outside of all analogy with this crowd of so-called gods.

In respect of the phallic aspect in its creed, Mormonism has never justified the notion that mere physical procreation is the measure of possible exaltation or advance toward godhood. The notion is not merely crude; it is absurd as well. Capacity for dominion depends on no such low basis, but, rather, on intellectual and moral greatness. It is perfectly conceivable that the first in a genealogical line should be least of all adapted to a position of lordship, that an Adam should be utterly distanced in this respect by thousands upon thousands of his descendants. Chronological priority in no wise describes merit or high capacity; neither does the number of one's

progeny. Breadth, power, and wealth of personality, which alone entitle to dominion, are not dependent on these things. It is the number and quality of a man's virtues that count and not the number of his wives. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that the scheme of plurality of wives is branded with selfishness and injustice. The number belonging to the male and to the female sex respectively is too nearly equal to make it possible for men to multiply wives without diminishing the chances of their fellows to enter at all into marital relations. A selfish plutocratic hierarchy might conceivably be pleased with the license of the harem system; but men who recognize the demands of equality and justice can discover no apology for such a system.

The sacerdotal phase of Mormonism invites, like the other phases commented upon, to unsparing crit-

icism. It pictures God as inconceivably narrow, technical, and lacking in magnanimity. No one but a grand master of red tape, a being a thousand times more concerned about method than about the interests of those to whom the method applies, could be imagined to make the destiny of the race depend on a few external performances of a priesthood, in any such degree and manner as the Mormon teaching assumes. It is almost a marvel that the Latter Day Saints themselves can respect a God who rests the well-being of the rational and moral creation on that ridiculously contracted pedestal.

In addition to the consideration of the four doctrinal phases specially selected for criticism, a brief comment on the doctrine of "blood atonement" will not be amiss. Expression was given to this grim tenet September 21, 1856, in addresses by J. M. Grant and Brigham Young. The former re-

marked: "I say that there are men and women that I would advise to go to the President immediately, and ask him to appoint a committee to attend to their case; and then let a place be selected, and let that committee shed their blood.... We have those amongst us that are full of all manner of abominations, those who need to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye."[1] "There are sins," said Brigham Young, "that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins, and the smoking incense would atone for their sins."[2] A few

[1] Journal of Discourses, iv, p. 49.
[2] Ibid., iv, p. 53.

months later he expounded the demands of love to the neighbor in this peculiar manner: "This is loving our neighbor as ourselves: if he needs help, help him; if he wants salvation, and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it."[1] These instructions look as if they were meant to be carried out in practice. A Mormon apologist would have us believe that never were they really acted upon; but there is evidence to the contrary.[2] It is worthy of note too that the apologist finds no better reason for not putting the doctrine in practice than the prejudice of the nations and the laws growing out of this prejudice. "When the time comes that the law of the Lord shall be in full force upon the earth, then the penalty will be inflicted for those crimes committed by

[1] Journal of Discourses, iv, p. 219.

[2] Linn, pp. 454–457; F. J. Cannon and G. L. Knapp, Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire, pp. 266–268.

persons under covenant not to commit them."[1]

Only an exegesis that is discreditably narrow and destitute of a sense for perspective can find any basis for this doctrine in the Scriptures. It is transcended in the better range of Old Testament teaching, and receives no sanction in the New Testament. The text in the Epistle to the Hebrews ix. 22, which our apologist supposes to contain a categorical declaration that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, contains nothing of the sort. Closely examined, it will be seen to embody only the historical statement, that in the symbolical ritual of Israel rites contemplating the remission of sins usually, though not universally, contained the element of bloody sacrifice. As for rational warrant for the merciless tenet, it is

[1] C. W. Penrose, Blood Atonement as Taught by Leading Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, pp. 43, 44.

scarcely possible to imagine how anyone can suppose that a wise, holy, and righteous God can refuse to be satisfied by the deepest contrition which the human spirit can render, and consent to be appeased only by blood smoking from the ground. A God exceedingly responsive to physical phenomena, but blind to the worth of the spiritual, might adopt that plan of administration. The infinite Father of spirits cannot be thought to proceed thus.

The foregoing discussion is not meant, of course, to imply that Mormon teaching has not taken over from the common stock of Christian principles and maxims many things that are worthy of all acceptation. Nevertheless, the conclusion is unavoidable that a system which incorporates and emphasizes the criticized doctrines is vitiated to its foundations.

PART IV
THE PRACTICAL TEST

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In taking up the data which make for the practical refutation of Mormonism it is not necessary to bring any sweeping charge against the character and conduct of the Mormons as a body. That a large proportion of them have been better than the system in which they have been ensnared may readily be admitted. Still further, it can be granted that a scheme of minute official oversight, such as is imposed upon the Mormon people, might be—so long as it should find subjects content to remain in a relatively passive state—favorable to the cultivation of a species of external morality. Concessions like these ought to be made by the critic without reluctance. He has no occasion to picture the

Mormons as exceptionally bad. He achieves the purpose of refutation in showing that their record is far from being in accord with their enormous claims, that it has been, in fact, no whit better than might be expected of any erring sect inflamed with a special zeal.

The ground of adverse comment on Mormon conduct extends most unmistakably to the record of the founder. Not to mention other things, two serious counts stand against him in connection with the closing period, or the years spent at Nauvoo. In the first place, he was given up to an unbridled libertinism. Curiously enough, a hint is furnished of his marital infidelity in the revelation in which he justifies polygamy, for in that document his wife Emma is solemnly enjoined to forgive his trespasses.[1] He practiced largely before

[1] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxxii, 56.

formulating a dogma which might serve to exculpate his practice. Evidence of his unbridled license is conclusive. Orthodox Mormon historians freely admit that their "prophet" practiced the theory of plurality of wives and advised his intimates to do likewise. J. H. Evans gives the names of four of the extra wives of Smith, and takes no pains to suggest that he is presenting a full list.[1] Writing in 1873, Stenhouse was able to testify: "At the present time there are probably a dozen 'sisters' in Utah who proudly acknowledge themselves to be the 'wives of Joseph,' and how many others there may have been who held that relationship 'no man knoweth.'"[2] The same candid writer avers also that one woman in Utah informed him that the said Joseph taught her that it was the privilege of wives to entertain 'proxy

[1] One Hundred Years of Mormonism, pp. 473, 474.
[2] The Rocky Mountain Saints, p. 185.

husbands' during the absence of their liege lords on mission.[1] While thus convicted of libertinism, the 'prophet' is amenable to the charge of occasionally indulging in strong drink to the point of intoxication. The Rev. Henry Caswall records four instances as reported to him, with specification of place and circumstances, in which the Mormon leader was plainly intoxicated.[2] William Law, while excusing Smith from the charge of habitual excess in drink, testifies that he saw him drunk on one occasion.[3] J. C. Bennett, who was closely associated with Smith at Nauvoo for an interval, declared it a matter of common knowledge that the "prophet" occasionally got "gloriously drunk;"[4] but here the

[1] Page 301.

[2] The City of the Mormons, pp. 49–51.

[3] Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, p. 510.

[4] The History of the Saints, 1842, p. 94. The record for occasional intoxication seems to go back to an early period. Levi Lewis testifies that he saw Smith drunk three times while he was preparing the Book of Mormon (Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, p. 268).

character of the witness robs the testimony of independent value.

That the followers of Smith at Nauvoo were not distinguished by exemplary conduct is well attested. Their reputation for thieving was widespread, and that in some part they earned the reputation is not open to doubt. The Rev. Henry Caswall records something of what he heard in 1842 about the disregard of property rights by the "Saints." "My host," he says, "mentioned that he had lived five years among heathen Indians, and had never been robbed by them of the most trifling article. During the three years which have elapsed since the settlement of the Mormons at Montrose and Nauvoo fourteen robberies, to the amount of two thousand dollars, have been committed upon his property."[1] Unequivocal evidence that much stealing was practiced by the

[1] The City of the Mormons, p. 51.

"Saints" is contained in the necessity which the church authorities recognized for public declarations that they did not sanction the practice.[1] According to John D. Lee, Joseph Smith, in an address in 1840, used this language: "I wish you all to know that because you were justified in taking property from your enemies, while engaged in war in Missouri, which was needed to support you, there is now a different condition of things. We are no longer at war, and you must stop stealing. When the right time comes we will go in force and take the whole State of Missouri. It belongs to us as our inheritance, but I want no more stealing."[2] As the moral atmosphere of Nauvoo was no safeguard against a liberal practice of stealing, so it did not exclude the kindred crime of counterfeiting. Referring to denials in rela-

[1] Linn, pp. 259, 260.

[2] Confession of John Doyle Lee, edition of 1905, pp. 127, 128.

tion to the matter, Stenhouse remarks: "That bogus money was made and in circulation in and around Nauvoo, and also was sent to a distance for circulation, can certainly not be denied. That some of 'the brethren' were engaged in its manufacture seems to be well supported by facts which subsequently transpired."[1] The full measure of this criminality need not, of course, be charged against Mormonism as such. In the mixed multitude which was gathered to its standard at Nauvoo there were undoubtedly men of bad antecedents. What can fairly be charged against Mormonism is that, on the one hand, it showed little power to vitalize conscience, and, on the other, by its overweening assumptions of superior rights in the world, tended to nurture the conviction in the minds of raw recruits that the "Gentiles" were lawful spoil.

[1] The Rocky Mountain Saints, p. 218.

In Utah, as the evidence abundantly shows, the Latter Day Saints continued to make a mixed record. A few years after their establishment there, Brigham Young had occasion to rebuke the "elders of Israel" for their profanity. "You will rip, and curse, and swear," he told them, "as bad as any pirates ever did."[1] At the same time he complained of thieving, noting that his own woodpile had not been respected. "Stories could be told of this kind," he said, "that would make professional thieves ashamed."[2] In another instance he charged some of the bishops with being guilty of defalcation. "We have documents," he declared, "to show that bishops have taken in hundreds of bushels of wheat, and only a small portion of it has come into the general tithing office; they stole it to let their friends speculate upon."[3] Re-

[1] Journal of Discourses, i, p. 211. Compare iii, p. 50.
[2] Ibid., i, p. 213.
[3] Ibid., iii, p. 342.

ferring at one time to the practices of Mormon merchants, he said: "I could not be honest and do as they do; they make five hundred per cent on some of their goods, and that too from innocent, confiding, poor, industrious people."[1] In a later address, while expressing his confidence in the good character of a large majority of Latter Day Saints, he added: "Yet we fellowship those who are full of iniquity and evil, individuals who are full of the spirit of Anti-christ."[2] Some allowance may be made for President Young's well-developed faculty for scolding; still his words afford a sufficient assurance that the Mormon community in its chosen retreat did not exemplify a specially high level of righteousness. At one epoch the level must have been decidedly low, if we are to trust this declaration of J. M.

[1] Journal of Discourses, xi, 114.
[2] Ibid., xvi, 26, 27.

Grant spoken on the eve of the so-called *reformation:* "Some have received the priesthood and a knowledge of the things of God, and still they dishonor the cause of truth, commit adultery and every other abomination beneath the heavens."[1]

In bringing up the darkest crime which has stained Mormon annals in Utah, we have no intention of implying that the Mormon people as a body, or any considerable fraction of them, had any responsible connection with that awful tragedy. The Mountain Meadow massacre (1857), in which a party of emigrants passing through Utah on their way to California was treacherously and cruelly murdered, to the number of one hundred and twenty men, women, and children, was the crime of the few rather than of the many. It is chargeable, however, against Mormonism in so far as this

[1] Journal of Discourses, iv, p. 49.

pretentious system furnished in its characteristic teachings such a hotbed for fanaticism as might easily be productive of outrage in the absence of powerful restraints.

As to the history of the Mountain Meadow massacre, two facts are well established. The first is that Mormons shared directly in its perpetration. This is admitted by their apologist, C. W. Penrose.[1] John D. Lee, who fulfilled the role of a scapegoat and was executed in 1877 for his part in the massacre, declared that the work of blood was wrought by fifty-four Mormons and three hundred Indians.[2] The second assured fact is that the Mormons were the principals in the tragedy and that the Indians are to be rated as their auxiliaries. Not only does the detailed narrative of Lee bring this out clearly; it is implied also in the admitted fact

[1] The Mountain Meadow Massacre, an Address, October 26, 1884.

[2] Confession, p. 315.

that a messenger was sent to Brigham Young to get his decision on the fate of the emigrants. The sending of the messenger amounts to an assumption on the part of those sending him that it lay within the province of Mormon power and influence to destroy or to spare the contemplated victims. The word returned from the Mormon president was that the emigrants should be allowed to pass on; but it came apparently too late. By the direction of the local authorities of Cedar City and vicinity the massacre had already been accomplished before the import of Brigham Young's reply was known. Thus the central authority seems not to have been directly implicated in the deed. That it can be excused from condoning the crime and hushing up all reference to it after its commission is far from evident. The allegation that Brigham Young supposed the massacre to have been perpetrated

solely by the Indians has far too much the appearance of a convenient myth, besides being contradictory to the statements of Lee and Hamblin.[1]

The Mountain Meadow atrocity was the most appalling exhibition of a fanaticism which reached its climax among the Mormons between 1856 and 1858. In the practice of polygamy their system provided a snare for the conscience which wrought mischief at the time of its introduction and is still a demoralizing factor. In the interval between its formal justification through the pretended revelation of Smith and its open promulgation (1843–1852) it was the occasion of much hypocrisy and falsehood. The "prophet" himself furnished a conspicuous precedent. In the Times and Seasons of February, 1844, together with his brother Hyrum, he gave his

[1] Lee's Confession, pp. 336ff.; Linn, pp. 530–532; Cannon and Knapp, Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire, p. 280.

signature to a statement which rates polygamy among "false and corrupt doctrines." Near the same date a published card, prepared by the direction of Emma Smith, denied the existence of polygamy among the Latter Day Saints, and one of the signers was Eliza R. Snow, who at that very time was a plural wife of Joseph Smith.[1] Parley P. Pratt, while in England, denounced the doctrine of plural marriage in strong terms. In the Millennial Star of 1846 he declared the doctrine "as foreign from the real principles of the Church as the devil is from God," though he was perfectly aware of the fact that it had been formally approved and practiced by the highest authorities of the Mormon communion. In France Elder John Taylor used language in 1850 which his hearers could only interpret as meaning that the

[1] Cannon and Knapp, Brigham Young and His Mormon Empire, p. 72.

charge of teaching and practicing polygamy was a slander against the Latter Day Saints; yet he himself had at that very time four wives in Utah.[1]

Since the admission of Utah to Statehood,[2] polygamy has been no less fruitful of crookedness than it was at the primary stage. In direct contravention of the revelation promulgated by President Wilford Woodruff,[3] and of the clause in the State constitution forever excluding polygamy, high officials in the Mormon Church went right on with their polygamous practices. The next year after the adoption of the constitution Apostle A. H. Cannon transgressed its provision by taking a new wife, and Apostle Teasdale did likewise soon after. During

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[1] John Hyde, Mormonism, pp. 13–15.

[2] The enabling act was passed in 1894, and the constitution adopted in 1895.

[3] The manifesto put forth in 1890, though not in the form of a revelation, was freely accorded that character by Mormon authorities, and after considerable delay was included in the book of Doctrine and Covenants.

the investigation incident to the question of seating Senator-elect Smoot (1904–1907) evidence of polygamous cohabitation was brought out in ample measure. Among those confessing their bad faith was President J. F. Smith. He admitted that since the pledge to give up polygamy had been made he had had eleven children born to him by his five wives. With this example of the leaders before them it lies in the nature of the case that not a few should be snared into violating both the requirement of an acknowledged revelation and the demand of the State constitution.[1] If any feature of relief is discoverable it lies in the judgment, sometimes expressed, that the senti-

[1] A writer who had abundant opportunity to know the facts has expressed them in these emphatic terms: "This is the new polygamy of Mormonism. The church leaders dare not acknowledge it for fear of the national consequences. They dare not even secretly issue certificates of plural marriage, lest the record should be betrayed. They protect the polygamist by a conspiracy of falsehood which is almost as shameful as the shame which it seeks to cover; and the infection of the duplicity spreads like a plague to corrupt the whole social life of the people" (F. J. Cannon, Under the Prophet in Utah, 1911, p. 341).

ment against the practice of polygamy has made in recent years distinct advances among the younger Mormons. It is not in evidence, however, that the theory of the intrinsic legitimacy of polygamy is being renounced in any part of the Mormon domain. By force of natural connection between theory and practice it may be expected that the demoralizing duplicity, which has been so pronounced since the admission of Utah to statehood, will not be subject to any speedy cure.

Aside from the blot caused by polygamy the social life of the Mormons, if not specially open to censure, cannot claim to be specially free from stain. A rather favorable report may indeed be made respecting their temperance habits and business honesty; but divorce has often had place among them on trivial grounds, and in some of their communities forced marriages have been of frequent occurrence.

In respect of patriotic devotion, Mormons in the present very likely do not in general allow themselves, by force of the theocratic assumptions pertaining to their system, to be crowded into a feeling of hostility or indifference toward the national government. But it lies in the nature of those assumptions to work more or less in that direction, and how effectually they can work was illustrated by a good part of the Brigham Young regime in Utah. His treatment of United States authority would have earned him, on any strict construction of the obligations of citizenship, the rewards of high treason. A sort of excuse for his hostile and contemptuous attitude was indeed alleged to exist in the deeds of violence perpetrated against the Saints in Missouri and Illinois. But the doings of border communities, provoked, though not in their actual form justified, by the

intemperate claims of the strange religionists, afforded no valid ground for reviling and resisting the national government. Apart from the impulses of theocratic sovereignty, and aside from a constituency recognizing the claims of that order of sovereignty, Brigham Young would not have been inclined to carry himself as he did toward the authority of the United States. In this line he was giving a prelude to that larger exhibition of lordship in which the Mormon hierarchy has declared its right and its expectation to figure. A purely spiritual dominion has never been its ideal.

Enough has been said, we judge, to establish our contention. That contention, it will be remembered, was not that the Mormons as a body can be proved to have been signally derelict in morals, but only that their conduct has not been any better than might be expected of any erring sect imbued

with a special zeal. The result stands out clearly from the review that the moral record of the Latter Day Saints puts to shame their pretense to be in a preeminent sense the people of the Lord.

We are forced to the conclusion that Mormonism, in consideration of the conditions of its origin, the content of its teaching, and the facts of its history, is entitled to but the scantiest respect. Its founder is convicted by the most decisive evidence of downright imposture. An element of self-deception may have been combined with the imposture, but it certainly collides with a sane historical judgment not to admit the latter in full measure. In several of its most prominent doctrines Mormonism has exhibited a thoroughly retrograde tendency; and in its practical fruits it has rather refuted than in any wise justified its enormous pretensions. The honest

devotion which many thousands of adherents have rendered to the Mormon system need not indeed be rated as religiously worthless; but it must be pronounced a great pity that the devotion has not been centered upon a more worthy object.

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